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City of San Jose, General Plan Task Force
Envision San Jose 2040
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Grassroots Organizations Hold Key to Sustainable Communities

Dear General Plan Task Force Members,

Thank you for continuing your research on the future of the San Jose community. Our community group, Save Coyote Valley Coalition, would like to draw attention to the issue of global and local food choices in regard to civic engagement in local politics.

We ask that you consider the short article provided below, *Just Who's Doing the Hoarding? Food Independence & Real Democracy*, by Frances Moore Lappe, published in the Huffington Post online syndicate. Lappe's reasoning can be applied to the land use decisions made by the Task Force in regard to strengthening our currently existing assets where choices still exist for people to have local autonomy over our food and economy, specifically in regard to the continuing operation of the Berryessa Flea Market (la pulga) and in Coyote Valley, the last remaining area in the City zoned as prime agriculture use.

Thank-you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Leila Forouhi, 18 July 2008s
Representative, Save Coyote Valley Coalition

Just Who's Doing the Hoarding? Food Independence and Real Democracy

by Frances Moore Lappe

As about 30 countries scramble to protect their citizens from hunger by limiting food exports, the title of a front-page *New York Times* article calls out: [“Hoarding Nations Drive Food Costs Ever Higher.”](#)

But where does responsible government action end and hoarding begin? (If the Irish government had begun a little hoarding instead of exporting grain in 1845, many deaths could have been avoided in the Irish potato famine.) It's not an easy question to answer, suggesting as it does that it might be a perfect time to ask how countries got into this no-win, export-or-not quandary to begin with.

Part of the answer is the longstanding premise, proposed by international lending agencies, that nations should use their farmland to grow what's most profitable in world trade and use the proceeds to import food as needed. For decades countries have been “encouraged” — even by making it a condition of a needed loan — to use prime farmland to grow luxury and non-food items from coffee to cut flowers for export, and to adopt an agricultural model dependent on imported fertilizers, pesticides, and seeds.

Surely today's deepening crisis reveals the danger here. The end of hunger and real food security require provisioning from domestic resources wherever possible. This approach, combined with a solid international grain reserve to be released in response to unforeseeable setbacks, has the best chance of assuring adequate food supplies. Could we Americans ever breathe easy if we were dependent on imported food for our very survival? I doubt that *any* people could. Why is that “energy independence” is embraced by the left and right, but you never even hear anyone utter the phrase “food independence?”

Analysts go on vying to tease out the varied pieces of the puzzle of today's renewed hunger crisis: Is it “hoarding” that's to be blamed? Is it heightened speculation? Is it the growing Asian elite's market-demand for grain-fed meat? The rising price of oil? The diversion of food to produce agrofuel? But these questions avoid asking why we have failed to end hunger *even in the good times*.

For years, the world's more-than-ample supply of food — keeping well ahead of population growth — has left over 800 million hungry. Because we've not grasped the root causes, today's prices risk pushing another one hundred million people into the ranks of the hungry. No amount of lifting of agricultural trade barriers will address this longstanding, now intensified, crisis.

How could this extreme and worsening inequality happen? Because of our thin concept of democracy — that elected government plus a one-rule economy (highest return to existing wealth) are all we need to meet human needs. As a result, economic and political power concentrate in such a way that policies emerge which defy the values and common-sense of most citizens.

For, where are everyday citizens who would choose to have their survival dependent on the vagaries of volatile international markets? *Nowhere*.

Thus, our hunger crisis is actually a *democracy crisis*. Hunger can be eliminated only as we remove the influence of concentrated wealth over public choices and ensure the ongoing, healthy

distribution of power. The sooner we start recasting the crisis thusly, the sooner we'll all be able to thrive.